



**Minutes Cross Party Autism Group / Cofnodion Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
12:00-1:30pm Tachwedd 13 November, 2013
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**

1. WELCOME / CROESO

Chair of CPAG, Mark Isherwood welcomed everyone to the final meeting of 2013, which was on the theme of autism and older people. The meeting was also attended by the following Assembly Members: Nick Ramsay, William Powell and Rhodri Glyn Thomas.

2. MATTERS ARISING

An update was given on the North Wales outreach service, which is pending registration with CSSIW. This should be finalised soon. Referrals are being taken for people requiring this type of service and those interested should contact the NAS' north Wales office directly. There will be a launch event for the new service early next year which is currently being planned.

Concerns were raised about the lack of opportunities available for people with autism who are over 25 years of age and it was suggested that the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology is invited to attend a future CPAG meeting.

3. PRESENTATIONS / CYFLWYNIADAU

The CPAG heard from three speakers, each of who had experiences of dealing with autism and ageing.

Leslie Wood is in his seventies and was diagnosed with autism in his fifties. Leslie said that raising awareness of autism was essential. He outlined the support that he received from NAS Cymru and the positive effects of this. Leslie also spoke candidly about the suicidal feelings he had experienced before being diagnosed and the importance being listened to and supported has had on improving his wellbeing.

Christine Durne was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome at the age of 48. Christine explained how not being diagnosed for so long had made her educational development difficult and had led to behavioural difficulties. As a result of not being able to get employment she had no structure in her life and felt disappointed by this. Christine added that with the help of NAS Cymru her quality of life had improved, but at 60 years of age she was worried about the future and about being given proper information and choice about the decisions she could make about her life. Christine insisted that Welsh Government must acknowledge and better support people with autism in Wales.

Finally Peter Bray spoke of his experience of being a father to his forty year old son who has autism. Peter described the daily difficulties that face them as a family and the stress that it can cause the family. He summarised by saying that he had an excellent son who would do anything for him and his wife. As a family, they laughed a lot and had learned to take each day as it comes with hope and confidence for better times.

Carol Povey, Director, NAS Centre for Autism gave a talk on research they had undertaken on older people with autism (40+) and the challenges this brings.

Carol acknowledged that this is the first time that the NAS had specifically carried out research into this issue. She went on to explain that while getting a diagnosis was

key to explaining why people had felt different throughout their lives, there was very little recognition of the services available for older people with autism nor the skills and knowledge among health professionals to adequately support them.

Carol stressed the importance of preventative services, including independent advocacy, and that Local Authorities should include older people with autism so that they could map and plan their provision properly. She concluded by saying that older people with autism deserved the services they need and had every right to receive them.

4. ACTIONS / PWYNTIAU GWEITHREDU

- Write to the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology highlighting the concern that there is a lack of provision and opportunity for people over 25 years of age and asking him to confirm what action the Welsh Government is taking to address this.
- Draw the conclusions and issues raised in the NAS' report 'Getting on? Growing older with autism' to the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS / UNRHYW FUSNES ARALL

Date of next CPAG meeting: National Assembly for Wales, 12 February 2013 12:00-1:15